



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
WESTERN STATE HOSPITAL
9601 Steilacoom Blvd. S.W., Lakewood Washington, 98498-7213 MS W27-19

January 9, 2015

Re: Substitute Service for HIPAA Breach Notification

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requires the Department of Social and Health Services Western State Hospital (WSH) to notify potentially affected clients of breaches. A breach was discovered on September 5, 2014 that affected some WSH patients. WSH notified all affected WSH patients by mail on November 3, 2014. Approximately 24 of those notifications were returned to WSH as undeliverable. This message constitutes substitute service for those patients we attempted to mail notification to but were unable to reach.

Western State Hospital regrets to inform certain patients that copies of your protected health information (PHI) were removed from Western State Hospital (WSH) without proper authorization. We discovered on September 5, 2014 that a staff member had files stored at home against WSH policy. Unfortunately, it appears that confidential protected health information (PHI) identifying you may have been accessed by someone not authorized by law to see it. This individual notified the Department of the documents in the home and returned the documents to WSH. Because the program serving you is covered by the HIPAA Privacy Rule, we are notifying you of the breach as required by that rule in 45 CFR 164.404.

The following types of PHI may have been exposed:

- **The fact that you were a WSH patient**
- **Name**
- **DOB**
- **Diagnosis**
- **Social Security Number (for one individual patient)**

We are extremely sorry for this situation and understand it may cause concern. We try very hard to earn your trust, and that includes protecting sensitive information about you. We take client confidentiality very seriously.

There are important things for you to know:

As a result of this incident, we have conducted an investigation and obtained the documents improperly removed from WSH. **We have reminded staff of the expectations to protect PHI by distributing WSH Policy 1.7.15 Staff Access To And Protection Of Protected Health Information which prohibits staff from removing PHI from the hospital grounds to accomplish routine work normally performed at WSH (i.e. working at home) is prohibited.** We strive to protect all of our client data and regret any upset to you.

What You Can Do

We do not think that the exposed information was sufficient to steal your identity or impact your credit. However, if you are concerned, you can find information on actions you can take to protect yourself on the websites of the Washington State Office of the Attorney General at: <http://www.atg.wa.gov/ConsumerIssues/ID-Privacy.aspx> and for the Federal Trade Commission at: <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/>. We will tell you if we receive any more information that shows your credit or identity may be at risk.

If there is anything we can do to assist you or if you have questions, please contact:

Jannah Abdul-Qadir, HIPAA Privacy Officer
Western State Hospital
253-761-3323

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jannah Abdul-Qadir".

Jannah Abdul-Qadir